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Reviewed work:

Phonological Awareness and Reading Acquisition: An Educational Proposal for Introducing English in Italian Preschools (2013). Verusca Costenaro. München, Germany: LINCOM GmbH. Pp. 461. ISBN 3862884163 (paperback) \$107.60

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In this monograph, Costenaro explores the relationship between the phonological awareness of preschool children and their later development of both first (L1) and second language (L2) literacy skills. Blachman (1994) states that phonological awareness is the awareness of, and the ability to manipulate, the phonological segments represented in an alphabetic language. Studies of phonological awareness have traditionally associated this ability with the reading process (Fox & Routh, 1975; Koda, 1998; Liberman, 1971). Understanding the sound structure of a certain word enables a child to decode that word in print.

This book is comprised of 10 chapters that aim to address the relationship between phonological awareness and reading acquisition. First, an historical background of early (foreign/second) language teaching and learning in Italy is presented. After this brief introduction, Costenaro discusses the theoretical underpinnings of phonological awareness (PA) and delves into the connection between PA, word recognition, and literacy development. The study then uses empirical evidence to investigate phonological awareness in L1 and L2 English, as well as cross-language transfer effects among English and other typologically similar and dissimilar languages (e.g., Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Wang, Perfetti, & Liu, 2005). Finally, the author uses the educational environment in Italian schools as a framework to propose some activities and tasks to enhance preschoolers' phonological awareness skills and other oral proficiencies in English.

Chapter 1 provides an historical overview of early language teaching methodology (ELTM) in the past four decades in Italy. Costenaro describes some benchmark projects in the field of early language teaching and learning across different historical phases, from the initiation of Insegnamento della Lingua Straniera nella Scuola Elementare (ILSSE, Teaching Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools) to the implementation of Inglese Dinamico (Dynamic English) and Progetto Infanzia (Infancy Project). In the end, Costenaro proposes that the establishment of a scientific foundation is essential to the successful implementation of ELTM activities. She highlights the role of phonological awareness in Italian projects, pointing out that most previous projects have overlooked the contribution of phonological awareness to the development of children's later reading skills.

Chapter 2 considers what phonological awareness is, what the components of phonological awareness are, and how these skills can be developed. The author reiterates the traditional conceptualization of phonological awareness as the ability to manipulate the phonological segments in an alphabetic orthography. Phonological awareness, from the perspective of Gillon (2004), is an important facet of metalinguistic awareness that integrates phonological processing abilities and other metalinguistic abilities (e.g., semantic, morphological and syntactic awareness). This chapter also introduces the typical developmental sequences of phonological awareness in English, from larger units (syllables) to smaller units (phonemes). Based on this developmental sequence, the author examines the relationship between dyslexia and reading skills in both English and Italian-speaking children, and stresses the importance of phonological awareness in reading disabilities.

Chapter 3 extends the discussion to phonological awareness and word recognition. Since children use reading to map visual word forms (orthography) to auditory stimuli (phonology), it is vital to understand their word recognition processes. Several theoretical models of word recognition are presented in this chapter, including the dual-route model, the analogy model, and the connectionist model. The dual-route model emphasizes two routes, namely phonological route and visual route in word recognition. The analogy model focuses on recognizing words by connecting spelling and phonological similarities. And the connectionist model stresses that the connection between spoken and written words is activated by the interactions of orthographic, phonological, and semantic units. In summary, all of these models highlight the role of phonological awareness in word recognition and the contribution of phonological awareness to children's reading and spelling development in both alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages.

Chapter 4 discusses the long-term effect of phonological awareness on later reading and literacy development. Costenaro introduces the concept of emergent literacy and specifies three theoretical models that demonstrate how phonological awareness can strengthen the development of children's emergent literacy skills. The author specifically focuses on a meta-analysis conducted by the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) in the USA. The results show that phonological awareness, as a crucial component of emergent literacy skills, has a medium-to-large association with later literacy development. The rest of the chapter explores the predictive power of phonological awareness, which can be divided into different levels of skills including onset-rhyme awareness, rhyme knowledge, phoneme knowledge, and syllable awareness.

Chapter 5 discusses the role of L1 phonological awareness intervention and training in enhancing children's phonological awareness skills. The author describes three meta-analyses concerning the effect of phonological awareness instruction. The results reveal that such instruction tends to have a relatively large and statistically significant effect on phonological awareness. This section moves into a discussion of instructional frameworks pertaining to phonological awareness intervention in L1. The author proposes that teachers could use different tasks to develop phonological awareness and adjust task difficulty according to student needs. Finally, based on the results of the meta-analyses, Costenaro concludes that it is necessary to integrate phonological awareness activities with alphabetic knowledge tasks.

Chapter 6 explores the pattern of phonological awareness development that arises when children learn to read in two languages. In line with the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979), Costenaro argues that pre-school children's emergent literacy skills and phonological awareness in L1 can transfer to facilitate the development of L2 literacy skills. She discusses some evidence-based studies, which have found that phonological abilities can even transfer between two alphabetic languages and two typologically unrelated languages.

Chapter 7 aims to apply the theoretical framework of phonological awareness and early literacy development to the specific field of ELTM in Italian schools. The topics of child bilingualism and biliteracy education come into play in a discussion of literacy acquisition in bilingual environments. Costenaro suggests that language and literacy acquisition could be fostered among young learners through the embedding of two general teaching methods (the 'experiential language teaching' method and the 'playful' method) in phonological awareness activities. This chapter also briefly discusses second language acquisition from the neuro-linguistic perspective. Costenaro concludes that phonological awareness activities should be incorporated into the broader environment of early bilingual education.

Chapter 8 introduces some factors that come into play in the development of phonological awareness of English as a foreign language in Italian schools. The chapter discusses the psychological units (e.g., rhyming and alliteration) of both English and Italian, and brings in empirical evidence from previous chapters to investigate the relationship between phonological awareness and drilling. Costenaro suggests some specific tasks and activities (such as the onset-rhyme awareness task, the phoneme awareness task, and the one-to-one correspondence awareness task) that can be employed to foster children's phonological awareness of English.

Chapters 9 and 10 provide details concerning each individual task and activity that supports the development of phonological awareness from larger units to smaller units. The phonological awareness skills that children must acquire include the awareness of sound, sentence, word, syllable, onset-rhyme, and one-to-one correspondence. To facilitate phonological awareness skills, specific games and activities can be used to train young learners to identify, isolate, blend, segment, and manipulate the phonemes of English.

This book clearly identifies the scope of phonological awareness training and reading acquisition among young children in Italian schools. The most compelling part of this book is the connection the author develops between the theoretical framework of phonological awareness and proposals for specific tasks and activities in a classroom context. Costenaro draws upon solid theoretical

background (e.g., phonological awareness, emergent literacy skills, cross-language transfer) to support her argument that phonological awareness triggers the development of alphabetic literacy. In addition to a wealth of empirical data, the last two chapters feature in-depth syntheses of various tasks and activities that English educators can draw upon in pedagogical practice. The author presents detailed information of each task, including categories of phonological awareness, objectives of the task, materials needed, description of the processes, and task variation. These proposed activities and games provide some hands-on materials that will surely be useful to English educators.

In all, this book is highly recommended to readers interested in early literacy development from a psycholinguistic perspective. More specifically, this book provides insights into metalinguistic awareness and reading development.

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